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SIPDIS
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MESSAGE REJECTED - CONTAINS UNRECOGNIZED ORIGINATOR
-- ERRORED MESSAGE FOLLOWS --
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FM AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC
INFO EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO
RUEHPOD/AMEMBASSY PODGORICA
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PODGORICA 000140

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE ALSO FOR INR/NB

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [MW](#)
SUBJECT: "PRO-WESTERN" SERBIAN NATIONALIST IN MONTENEGRO

REF: PODGORICA 100

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SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PLEASE HANDLE ACCORDINGLY

¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: ANDRIJA MANDIC, LEADER OF THE SERBIAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (SNS) IN MONTENEGRO, TOLD POLOFF APRIL 27 THAT THE DRAFT CONSTITUTION DID NOT GO FAR ENOUGH IN PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF THE SERBIAN PEOPLE. WHILE SINGLING OUT THE IMPORTANCE OF RUSSIA TO MONTENEGRO, MANDIC SAID HE WAS TRYING TO GET HIS PARTY TO END ITS OPPOSITION TO NATO, CALLING HIMSELF "PRO-WESTERN." HE DECLINED OPPORTUNITIES TO DISCUSS KOSOVO. END SUMMARY.

CONSTITUTION: STILL TIME FOR COMPROMISES

¶2. (SBU) POLOFF SOUGHT A MEETING APRIL 27 WITH ANDRIJA MANDIC, LEADER OF THE SERBIAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (SNS) IN MONTENEGRO. MANDIC DISAVOWED NEWS REPORTS THAT HE HAD SAID SERBS SHOULD USE EXTRA-CONSTITUTIONAL MEANS TO PROTECT THEIR RIGHTS IF THE CONSTITUTION DOES NOT ENSURE THE RIGHTS OF GROUPS AS WELL AS INDIVIDUALS. HE SAID THAT IT WAS NEBOJSA MEDOJIVIC (MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE - PZP), SECONDED BY SINISTAJ OF THE ALBANIAN ALTERNATIVE, WHO ALLUDED TO "RIOTS" IF THE "RIGHTS OF ALBANIANS" WERE NOT PROTECTED.

¶3. (SBU) MANDIC SAID THAT THE SNS POSITION WAS THAT THE CONSTITUTION SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE POSITION "OF THE SERBIAN PEOPLE AS CITIZENS OF MONTENEGRO," AND NOT EXCLUSIVELY REFER TO "MONTENEGRINS". MANDIC FEELS THERE IS STILL SCOPE AND TIME ENOUGH TO REACH ACCEPTABLE LANGUAGE ON PEOPLES, LANGUAGE AND

RELIGION, AND THAT THE RULING PARTIES' LEGISLATIVE GROUPS ARE NOT/NOT MONOLITHIC BLOCKS ON THESE ISSUES. WHILE HE DID NOT EXPLICITLY EXPRESS A VIEW AS TO WHETHER THE CONSTITUTION WILL BE VOTED ON BEFORE THE PARLIAMENT'S SUMMER BREAK (BEGINNING IN JULY), HE DID NOT RULE OUT A RESUMPTION OF TALKS ON THE CONSTITUTION IN THE FALL. (NOTE: PARLIAMENT HAS EXTENDED THE PUBLIC DEBATE ON THE TEXT, TO NOW END ON MAY 26 VICE MAY 4. END NOTE.) HE STRESSED THAT SNS VOTED FOR THE DRAFT (BRACKETED) CONSTITUTION TEXT, INDICATING THAT SHOWED SNS'S WILLINGNESS TO REACH CONSENSUS ON THE FINAL DOCUMENT.

14. (SBU) MANDIC ALSO SAID THE VENICE COMMISSION, WHICH VISITED MONTENEGRO EARLIER IN THE WEEK, HAD REJECTED MEDOJEVIC'S PUSH FOR EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS A YEAR AFTER THE CONSTITUTION WAS ADOPTED. MANDIC WAS PLEASED WITH THE COMMISSION'S STANCE; MANDIC SAID HIS PARTY DOES NOT WANT EARLY ELECTIONS.

A LOYAL OPPOSITION

15. (SBU) MANDIC SAID HIS LOCAL GROUPS WERE CRITICIZING THE SNS PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOR NOT TAKING A MORE DIAMETRICAL POSITION TO THE GOM; HE SAID HE WANTS THE SNS TO BE ABLE TO PLAY A PRODUCTIVE ROLE IN SUPPORTING MONTENEGRO'S DEVELOPMENT. HE AGREED THAT HE WANTS HIS PARTY TO BE "A LOYAL OPPOSITION."

NATO

16. (SBU) MANDIC TOLD POLOFF THAT HE WENT TO HIS MAIN BOARD WITH A PROPOSAL THAT SNS ENDORSE NATO MEMBERSHIP FOR MONTENEGRO. HE SAYS HIS MAIN BOARD REJECTED THAT, CLAIMING THEIR VOTERS WOULD NOT GO FOR IT. POLOFF TOLD MANDIC THAT HE AGREED MANDIC NEEDED TO STAY CLOSE TO HIS VOTERS, TO LEAD THEM IN GAINING A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF NATO.

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RUSSIA

17. (U) MANDIC RAISED RUSSIA TWICE, ONCE AT THE END TO NOTE PM PUTIN SPEECH WITH ITS MORATORIUM ON CFE, AND EARLIER TO NOTE THAT HE APPRECIATES INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY INTEREST IN MONTENEGRO, "INCLUDING RUSSIA'S INTEREST -- EVEN THOUGH WE HAVEN'T MET WITH THE RUSSIAN EMBASSY SINCE THE NEW COM ARRIVED."

KOSOVO

¶8. (U) DESPITE SEVERAL OPENINGS, MANDIC DECLINED TO DISCUSS KOSOVO; HE DECLINED. EARLIER, IN PUBLIC, MANDIC AND THE SNS HAVE CALLED FOR THE GOM TO GIVE ITS FULL SUPPORT TO THE GOS ON KOSOVO.

COMMENT

¶9. (SBU) MANDIC, AND HIS SNS, POSED THE LARGEST SINGLE RISK OF CONFRONTATION OVER INDEPENDENCE LAST YEAR. AFTER HIS SERBIAN LIST BECAME THE SINGLE LARGEST PARLIAMENTARY GROUP IN OPPOSITION LAST SEPTEMBER, MANDIC HAS TONED DOWN HIS RHETORIC, IN PUBLIC AND ESPECIALLY IN PRIVATE. WITH A STRONG HOLD ON HIS PARTY AND GROUP'S LEADERSHIP, MANDIC'S ROLE HAS HELPED TO STABILIZE MONTENEGRO, A FACT REALIZED BY SOME (BUT NOT ALL) IN THE GOM. HE RECOGNIZES THAT HE CANNOT GET TOO FAR OUT AHEAD OF HIS VOTERS, HOWEVER, WITHOUT YIELDING LEADERSHIP TO SOMEONE LESS RESPONSIBLE AND THOUGHTFUL. MANDIC WAS AN INTERNATIONAL VISITOR IN EARLY ¶2005. END COMMENT.

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